

Heart Health...My Story

Steve , 46 suffered a heart attack 2 years ago, read about his experience, the treatment he went through and where he is today.

My health complaint

I suffered a heart attack 2 years ago. It was a scary time and thankfully I survived. Leading up to the day of the heart attack I was living my life as normal, going to work, refereeing football at the weekend and having a few beers with the boys. I felt completely fine and didn't think I had to worry about my health. Yes I was a bit overweight and to be honest my diet could be better but I ran around refereeing at weekends so felt I was doing my bit to keep fit.

After feeling a bit lightheaded one afternoon I got home from work and my daughter shouted to me from upstairs. I thought nothing of it and ran up the stairs, just before I reached the top I felt as though something was pressing on my chest and the pain shot down my arm, the next thing I collapsed into a heap on the floor. I thought I was about to die and I couldn't do anything about it.

Treatment

Initially I was rushed into hospital by ambulance, I don't remember exactly what was going on but I remember there being a lot of people fussing about, being hooked up to some machines with tests being done, it was all a bit scary.

Luckily I didn't have to undergo surgery as the blood clot which caused my heart attack could be solved by medication.

I stayed in hospital for a few days so my condition could be monitored. Whilst I was there I saw a number of different health professionals including someone from the cardiac rehab team who told me more about my condition, the medications I will need, and lifestyle changes I needed to make.

I also saw a physio whilst I was in hospital and started doing some gentle exercises. Speaking to all the different health professionals was quite scary and I knew my life was going to be different once I got out of hospital.

When I got home, for the first 6 weeks I had to take it easy, I wanted to help around the house more but knew if I overdid it I could end up back in hospital. I attended cardiac rehab sessions in the hospital twice a week which involved some light exercises like walking on a treadmill and I also tried to go for a short walk most days at home. I also went back to work within this time; it was about 4 weeks after my heart attack. I was lucky I had an understanding line manager so I didn't have my normal full workload

and only undertook light duties.

What I did

Having a heart attack was a major wake up call for me and I decided it was time to make some changes to my lifestyle. These included:

- **Changing my diet:** I'd never really put much thought into my diet and just grabbed what was quick and easy. I now try to choose lower fat options, have fish 3 times a week and include lots of fresh fruit and veg.
- **Doing more exercise:** Even though before my heart attack I was refereeing almost every weekend I didn't do much during the week which didn't help. After the exercise classes in the hospital I had the option to attend further cardiac rehab in my local leisure centre so I decided to give it a go and I now go to the gym twice a week in supervised sessions and really enjoy it.
- **Drinking less alcohol:** I only used to ever drink at weekend and I didn't think I was having that much or that it could increase my risk of a heart attack. I now know the maximum number of units I should have a day and I stick to it most of the time.
- **Losing weight:** Doing all of the above has helped me lose weight which I needed to do. I actually feel more energetic than I did before my heart attack since making these changes which has really surprised me.

Where I am now

Two months on from my heart attack I'm now back to full duties at work and seem to be getting on fine. I'm glad I could have a gradual introduction back into work as doing this much earlier on would have been too much.

I'm still continuing with my lifestyle changes and taking medication daily. I'm not quite back to refereeing yet and this could take a while but I'm still enjoying the programme at the gym and after another couple of weeks I'll be able to go unsupervised which is both scary but exciting. It's been great not only for the exercise but also meeting other people who have been through similar experiences.

I'm just enjoying living life to the full and doing everything I can to stay healthy for as long as possible. There can be life after a heart attack!